



U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, Chairman

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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SENATE HELP COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES BILL TO IMPROVE PATIENT SAFETY

*Gregg-Sponsored Bill aimed at improving the safety and quality of
health care delivered across the United States.*

*Bill encourages a culture of safety by creating a system where health professionals can
share information about their mistakes to prevent them from being repeated.*

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions today unanimously approved landmark legislation that will improve the quality and safety of American health care. The bill, which is sponsored by Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH), along with Senators Jim Jeffords (I-VT), Bill Frist (R-TN), and John Breaux (D-LA) will create a system where doctors and other health care professional can report medical errors in an effort to reduce their occurrence and save lives.

"The bill we are passing through committee today marks the end of four long years of partisan gridlock and represents a victory for every health care consumer, young and old," said Gregg. "This bill will allow collaboration among health care providers to encourage a culture of safety and provide a framework to ensure that medical errors will be prevented."

"Even one preventable death is too many. America's health care system needs to work better at delivering safe, quality health care. Unfortunately, the medical liability system has created a 'culture of blame,' which causes errors to be hidden and repeated. So long as there is a human element to health care, there will be human error. This bill will give doctors and other health care professionals a chance to report their mistakes, so they can learn from them and make sure they are not repeated over and over again. This bill will allow the health care industry to prevent mistakes and save lives," said Senator Gregg.

The "Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2003" or S.720 will create a system where doctors and other health care professionals can report medical errors and their root causes in an effort to improve the safety and quality of health care they deliver. The reports will be analyzed by patient safety organizations, which will develop new procedures and techniques to protect patients and prevent correctable errors. The bill will allow medical errors to be continually identified and addressed without fear of being sued and without compromising patients' legal

rights. Emphasizing cultural change and providing the framework for that to happen is essential to strengthening the safety and quality of health care.

The 1999 Institute of Medicine study estimates that 98,000 Americans die each year from medical errors – or about 275 deaths a day. More people die from medical errors in the U.S. than from breast cancer, AIDS, or traffic accidents. According to many recent studies, many of these medical errors are preventable.

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